

GOLF BALL ACCIDENTS.

A FORM of accident which is deplorable, not only on account of its serious character, but also because it is preventable, is the bursting of a golf ball, with its frequent result of destruction of eyesight. Accounts appear in the lay press from time to time of these mishaps, and these have been confirmed by several reports of such cases in medical journals. In a recent issue of the *British Medical Journal*, Drs. Elliot and Inman report such a case and refer to several others in the literature.

It appears that there is no danger of a golf ball exploding when subjected only to the ordinary vicissitudes of play, but the exploration of its interior by too curious individuals is apt to have a tragic denouement. Even then there would be no danger if the investigator would be content with unwrapping the ball layer by layer, but in many cases this process is too tedious and must be expedited by the use of a knife. The English authors mentioned above intimate that

* Abstracted in a recent issue of the *Lancet*.

this accident is less frequent in the British Isles than in America, because of the more inquiring turn of the Yankee mind.

Golf balls are dangerous only when the core is liquid, hence the air or the solid core balls may be cut into with impunity. The usual substance used in the liquid core is soft soap, which, of course, is strongly alkaline, and in some cases even more dangerous materials, such as sulphuric acid, have been found. Rarely, water is used and this is comparatively innocuous. The liquid is confined in a rubber bag tied with a string, and around this are wound many yards of rubber tape by machine, and the liquid is thus subjected to enormous pressure. When a knife is used to cut through these layers of tape it suddenly penetrates into the bag, and the liquid contents are ejected with great violence. Should any of these strike the eye, as has been the case in a number of instances, the trauma itself plus the irritating character of the fluid, is likely to have serious results. Some cases have been seen by an ophthalmologist within two hours after the injury, and have been placed under a general anesthetic to permit of heroic treatment, but have, nevertheless, resulted in complete loss of vision.

There has been some legislative agitation to prevent the sale of liquid core golf balls, but only one state has actually passed such a law. Most golf clubs post warnings in their club houses against the cutting open of balls, but, unfortunately, this risky experiment is usually performed by caddies and others who do not see these placards. One remedy, then, which would suggest itself would be that golf players refrain from presenting caddies with used balls, or at least warn them of the danger of cutting into them. Should a golf player wish to cut into a ball for any purpose he should not do it in the presence of bystanders; he should wear gloves, and he should place between himself and the ball he is dissecting some such protection as a pane of window glass.

Obviously it behooves the profession to warn their golf-playing patients of the dangers of the liquid core ball. If a case is seen immediately after a projection into the eye of the contents of a ball, thorough cleansing of the eye is, of course, imperative, even if a general anesthetic be required. Experts now state that the liquid core ball has no greater elasticity than the solid core ball manufactured by certain leading deal-

ers, therefore there would seem to be no excuse for this deadly plaything.